

## Putting a name on it

Petition asks the area to be designated as the Lewis-Clark Viticulture area

*by Kathy Hedberg of the Tribune*

North central Idaho, along with three counties in southeastern Washington, is set to become the second federally recognized wine-producing region in the state.

Thomas Hogue, director of media and congressional affairs for the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade bureau of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, said a petition has been filed to make parts of the Nez Perce, Latah, Lewis, Clearwater, Asotin, Garfield and Whitman counties its own distinct American Viticulture Area.

The petition is awaiting publication in the Federal Register and following that a public comment period, the designation could be made sometime next year.

"Petitioners have to put together a fairly comprehensive package," Hogue said. "You're talking about differentiation in viticulture from everything around it, including climate, geology, geographical features. You're establishing there's a history of winemaking and a name recognition in the area. There's quite a bit that goes into it."

According to the bureau, the petition was filed by Alan Busacca, no address given, in May 2013, and if approved would be called the Lewis-Clark Viticulture Area.

Another petition for federal recognition of wine production was filed in the Eagle foothills of Gem and Ada counties in June 2013. The Snake River American Viticulture Area in southwestern Idaho was established in 2007.

Once the petition has been filed in the Federal Register, Hogue said, a 90-day public comment period will be opened. The bureau will review the comments and make whatever adjustments are called for, such as expanding or contracting the area.

In this case, he said, if the Lewis-Clark Viticulture Area is approved, the Washington counties, parts of which are already part of the Columbia Valley Viticulture Area, may have to be modified.

At that point the bureau will decide whether to grant the petition and declare the area an American Viticulture Area.

"What happens once you've established an AVA, if you're going to use the AVA on your label, 85 percent of the wine has to be derived from grapes grown in that AVA," Hogue said.

In addition, in the case of American wine, an American Viticulture Area designation declares the wine has been fully finished within the viticulture area and blended in a way that does not result in an alteration of class and type of wine grape.

The designation of a federally recognized wine-producing region allows winemakers and consumers to attribute a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of wine made from grapes grown in an area to its geographic origin, according to the bureau.

